Affordable summer camps near Culver City for 2026

A 9-year-old boy in Culver City has at least a dozen genuinely free or low-cost summer program options for 2026, ranging from fully free drop-in recreation to structured day camps under $100 per week. The strongest free options are the Boys & Girls Club at Mar Vista Gardens (tuition-free, right in Culver City), LA County's "Every Body Plays" drop-in program at nearby parks, and the CCUSD Expanded Learning summer program for enrolled students. For structured full-day camps at modest cost, Culver City's Just4Kids at ~$100/week and the Inglewood summer day camp at ~$60/week rank among the best values in the region. Families needing flexible scheduling have fewer choices, but LA County's free drop-in program and Steve & Kate's day-pass model offer genuine flexibility. Registration for the most popular programs is already open or imminent — acting quickly is essential.

The best free programs are hiding in plain sight

Several completely free, full-day summer programs operate within minutes of Culver City. The most important options:

Boys & Girls Club of Santa Monica — Mar Vista Gardens is the standout. Located at **4901 Marionwood Dr in Culver City itself**, this club runs a **tuition-free summer program** (Smbgc) Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., (Smbgc) serving grades K–12. Activities include nature experiences, field trips, gardening, reading, leadership, (Smbgc) arts, and sports. Healthy meals and snacks are provided daily. (Smbgc) The club also offers free transportation from Stoner and Braddock elementary schools. (Bgcmla) Registration is through the parent portal (Smbgc) at smbgc.org or by calling 310-361-8500. (Smbgc +2) Though situated in the Mar Vista Gardens housing community, the program is open to the broader community.

LA County Parks' "Every Body Plays" is a **free, drop-in recreation program** requiring no registration (Los Angeles County Parks) — the best option for families wanting maximum flexibility. Trained staff lead sports, fitness, arts and crafts, STEM activities, and outdoor games. Healthy snacks are provided. (Lapost) During summer, hours expand to cover much of the day. The nearest participating parks include **Ladera Park** (6027 Ladera Park Ave, ~3 miles), **Lennox Park** (10828 Condon Ave, ~5 miles), **Jesse Owens Park** (9651 S. Western Ave), and **Athens Park** (12603 S. Broadway). Ages 7–17 are served. Summer 2026 schedules should post at parks.lacounty.gov by April or May — call individual parks to confirm.

LA County's ESTEAM Summer Camp runs an **8-week structured program for ages 6–11** at select county parks, blending environment, science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. (Los Angeles County Parks) The program has historically been free or very low cost with full scholarships available. (Govdelivery) Registration opens via ActiveNet

Los Angeles County Parks at apm.activecommunities.com/losangelescounty. Nearby locations have included Ladera Park, Jesse Owens Park, and Lennox Park, though 2026 sites are pending.

CCUSD's Expanded Learning (ELO-P) summer program provides free enrichment for TK–6th graders Culver City Unified School ... enrolled in Culver City schools. Funded by the state, the program covers academic, social-emotional, and physical enrichment. ccusd Term 1 runs June 22–July 10 and Term 2 runs July 13–31, 2026. Californiaschools Contact your child's school site or CCUSD Educational Services for enrollment details at ccusd.org.

LA City Recreation Centers near Culver City offer free programming through the **GPLA (Great Playground LA)** and **LA Kids** initiatives at over 125 centers. The closest centers — **Palms Recreation Center** (2950 Overland Ave, ~2 miles), **Mar Vista Recreation Center** (11430 Woodbine Ave, ~3 miles), **Cheviot Hills Recreation Center** (2551 Motor Ave, ~3 miles), and **Baldwin Hills Recreation Center** (5401 Highlight Pl, ~4 miles) — run summer day camps ranging from **free to roughly $25–$100 per session**. Each center sets its own schedule and pricing, so call directly for summer 2026 details starting in April.

Structured day camps under $125 per week

For families wanting an organized, full-day camp experience at a manageable price, several municipal and nonprofit programs deliver exceptional value.

Culver City Just4Kids Day Camp is the city's flagship program at Veterans Park (4153 Overland Ave). It runs ACTIVEkids June 15–August 7, 2026, culvercity Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m., ACTIVEkids for ages 5–12. ACTIVEkids culvercity The cost is approximately **$100/week for Culver City residents** and $150/week for non-residents, 211 LA with optional early-morning care from 7 a.m. for ~$26/week extra. ACTIVEkids Activities include arts and crafts, outdoor games, a weekly swim day at the Plunge, and one field trip per week. ACTIVEkids Registration opened March 2 for residents and March 9 Elsegundorecparks for the public culvercity via ActiveNet (anc.apm.activecommunities.com/culvercity). **This program fills extremely fast** — parents report needing to be online at exactly 7 a.m. on registration day. culvercity Contact: 310-253-6650.

City of Inglewood Summer Day Camp offers one of the area's lowest prices. Four two-week sessions run mid-June through early August at multiple Inglewood parks (Darby Park, Rogers Park, Siminski Park, Lockhaven Community Center). Hours are 9 a.m.–4 p.m. with before-care from 7:30 a.m. and after-care to 6 p.m. Pricing has been **$121 per two-week session without extended care** (~$60/week) and $200 with extended care (~$100/week), including field trips and a camp T-shirt. Inglewood Ages 3–12. Inglewood Contact: 310-412-8700 or check cityofinglewood.org for 2026 registration details.

Boys & Girls Club of Santa Monica — Main Branch (1220 Lincoln Blvd, Santa Monica) charges just **$125 total for the entire 4-week summer session** Smbgc (June 29–July 24, 2026), not per week. Hours are 8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Smbgc for grades 1–12. Full scholarships are available for families with financial need — apply during registration. Smbgc Members also get access to a free sleepaway week at Camp Big Bear (June 22–26). Smbgc Register at bgcsantamonica.my.site.com.

Boys & Girls Club of Metro LA — Venice (2232 Lincoln Blvd, Venice, ~5 miles) runs a 7-week full-day summer program CA with just a **$25–$75 annual membership fee**. Bgcmla Hours are 8 a.m.–6 p.m. with academic enrichment, sports, arts, music, STEM, CA and field trips. Over **95% of families qualify for financial aid**. Bgcmla The club explicitly serves Culver City, Mar Vista, Playa Vista, Palms, and Westchester residents. Bgcmla Contact: 310-390-4477 or bgcmla.org/venice.

YMCA camps offer financial aid that can cut costs significantly

The **Culver-Palms Family YMCA** (camp held at El Rincon Elementary, 11177 Overland Ave, Culver City) YMCA runs summer day camp June 15–August 14, 2026, from 7 a.m.–6 p.m. for ages 4–11. Published rates are **$229/week for members and $269/week for non-members** ymcala — above the $200 threshold but potentially much lower with aid. The YMCA of Metropolitan LA offers need-based financial assistance on a sliding scale; YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap... apply by downloading the Confidential Financial Assistance Application at ymcala.org/join and emailing it to FA@ymcaLA.org. Ymcala Processing takes 7–10 business days, and funds are first-come, first-served. The Culver-Palms branch also **accepts Crystal Stairs third-party childcare subsidy payments**, Culver City Unified School ... making it effectively free for qualifying families. Culver City Unified School ...

Other nearby YMCA branches with slightly lower base rates include:

- **Collins & Katz YMCA** (West LA, ~5 miles): $209 members / $249 community, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. ymcala
- **Gardena-Carson YMCA** (~10 miles): **$189 members / $229 community** — the cheapest YMCA option nearby, with on-site pool and swim lessons included ymcala
- **Westchester YMCA** (~7 miles): $229/$269, with on-site pool and swim lessons twice weekly ymcala

All YMCA camps are ACA-accredited, register by the week (no daily drop-in), and include STEM, sports, performing arts, and field trips. Ymcala Contact DayCamp@ymcaLA.org for general questions.

Flexible and drop-in options do exist but are limited

True drop-in summer care is rare, but a few programs accommodate families who cannot commit to full weeks.

LA County's Every Body Plays (described above) is the only genuinely **free, no-registration, walk-up option**. A child can attend any day at any participating park during posted hours. This is ideal for supplementing other part-time arrangements.

Steve & Kate's Camp operates in Mar Vista and Santa Monica with a unique day-pass model. Families buy any number of passes and **use them on any day at any open location —** no weekly commitment. Steve & Kate's Camp +2 Hours are 8 a.m.–6 p.m. with lunch and snacks included. The standard rate for 15+ passes is **$114/day**, Steve & Kate's Camp which is expensive, but **need-based financial aid** is available Steve & Kate's Camp steveandkatescamp for California families earning up to ~$120,000 (family of 3) or ~$132,600 (family of 4). Apply at join.steveandkatescamp.com steveandkatescamp under the Plans section. Unused passes are automatically refunded steveandkatescamp by September 11, 2026. Steve & Kate's Camp Steve & Kate's Camp

Got Game Camp runs at multiple LA school sites including locations in West LA (~5 miles) and Mid-City (~7 miles). They offer a **daily rate of $95–$105/day**, with early-bird discounts available through May 8. Got Game Sports Ages 4–12 are grouped by age, and activities include sports, games, and creative options. Culvercityfriends Contact: admin@gotgamecamp.com or 310-975-8524. Got Game Sports

Culver City Just4Kids and most YMCA/BGC programs register by the week or session rather than by the day, but families can choose specific weeks rather than committing to the entire summer. **Library events and VBS programs** (see below) are also inherently flexible, single-event commitments.

Free enrichment from libraries, churches, and sleepaway camps

Several supplementary programs can fill gaps in a summer schedule at zero cost.

Library summer programs are all free and require no sustained commitment. The **Culver City Julian Dixon Library** (4975 Overland Ave) LA County Library participates in LA County Library's Summer Discovery Program (roughly June–August) with reading challenges, badges, prizes, and weekly in-person events including magic shows, STEM workshops, and art activities. Register at LACountyLibrary.org/summer-discovery or via the Beanstack app. LA County Library The LA County Library also runs **Summer Stars**, a free tutoring program with 30-minute sessions for grades 1–6 on Tuesday–Thursday afternoons. LA County Library LA County Library Nearby **LAPL branches** (Palms-Rancho Park, West LA, Venice) run their own "Summer With the Library" reading logs with free book prizes. LAist **Santa Monica Public Library** offers a

separate summer reading program with its own rewards. City of Santa Monica Enrolling in all three systems maximizes free books and activities.

Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs at Culver City churches are typically **free, one-week, morning-only** (9 a.m.–12:30 p.m.) programs announced in April or May. Churches that have historically offered VBS include Grace Lutheran Church, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Culver City Presbyterian Church, and St. Augustine Catholic Church. Search individual church websites starting in April or check groupvbs.com's VBS Finder tool.

The Salvation Army's Camp Daley in Calabasas offers residential (overnight) camp for ages 8–17 at just **$20–$25 per week**, including transportation by charter bus, all meals, lodging, and activities like swimming, sports, campfires, and arts. Salvationarmy Contact your nearest Salvation Army Corps (Inglewood or West LA) for registration. **Griffith Park Boys' Camp** (4730 Crystal Springs Dr) Lacity is an LA City–run sleepaway camp exclusively for boys ages 7–17 Mommy Poppins with air-conditioned cabins, a pool, rock climbing wall, archery, and themed weekly field trips. Pre-registration opened March 17, 2026 Mommy Poppins — contact Gp.boyscamp@lacity.org immediately. **Camp Harmony** by United in Harmony is a **100% free sleepaway camp** for ages 7–12 from underserved LA communities; access is by referral through Title I schools or community organizations Unitedinharmony — ask your child's school counselor.

Childcare subsidies can make any licensed camp free

Families with limited income may qualify for vouchers that cover summer camp costs at any licensed provider, including YMCA camps.

CalWORKs childcare subsidies are available through LA County DPSS for families receiving or recently receiving cash aid. Child Care Resource Center Apply at BenefitsCal.com or call 866-613-3777. Department of Public Soci... **Crystal Stairs** (crystalstairs.org, 323-421-2672) administers Alternative Payment Program vouchers for the Westside/South LA area, covering licensed childcare and camp programs — notably, the Culver-Palms YMCA explicitly accepts Crystal Stairs payments. Culver City Unified School ... For non-CalWORKs low-income working families, California's Alternative Payment Programs provide similar vouchers; Los Angeles Community In... contact the **City of LA Community Investment for Families Department** at communityinvestment.lacity.gov. Processing takes time, so apply well before summer.

Conclusion

The Culver City area has more affordable summer options than most families realize. **Three actions matter most right now**: first, contact the Boys & Girls Club at Mar Vista Gardens (free, full-day, in Culver City) about summer enrollment immediately. Second, check whether Culver City Just4Kids still has openings, since registration already opened in early March. Third, apply for YMCA financial assistance or Crystal Stairs subsidies now if income qualifies, since

both are first-come, first-served. For maximum flexibility on a budget, combine LA County's free drop-in "Every Body Plays" program with free library events and a week of VBS — a patchwork approach that can cover significant portions of the summer at zero cost. The overlooked gem for a 9-year-old boy specifically is **Griffith Park Boys' Camp**, a city-run sleepaway option with registration just opened (Mommy Poppins) — few programs offer this quality at this price point.